



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

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## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council

**Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter**

**Tuesday, August 5, 2008**

**7:30 PM**

**Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1**

#### REGULAR MEETING

#### **I. ROLL CALL**

*The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m. by Mayor Harry Watson.*

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

Members Absent: Councilor Brown-Tracy and Councilor Kolnaski

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Office Assistant Lori Watrous.*

#### **II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

*The Salute to the Flag was led by Ben Morse from the Groton Parks and Recreation Department.*

#### **III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS**

##### **Groton 4th of July Parade Awards**

*Ben Morse and Ron McGory presented awards to the winners of the Fourth of July parade. This year's theme was hometown heroes and awards were received for Best Use of Theme, Most Patriotic, Best Costumes, Best Music, Best Youth Participation, Best Parade Float, and Judges' Choice.*

##### **Recess for Public Hearing on:**

*Mayor Watson called a recess for the Public Hearing at 7:37 p.m.*

**2008-0180**

##### **Proposed Charter Revision**

##### **Heard at Public Hearing**

*The Town Clerk read the legal notice that appeared in The Day on July 25, 2008.*

*Ed Ettinger, 174 Cedar Road, Mystic, was asked by Margaret Smith, 148 High Street, Mystic, to convey her thoughts. Mrs. Smith feels that the two party system does not represent the majority of electors in Town and that recognizing the existence of the two party system in the Charter is unconstitutional because neither the United States Constitution nor the Connecticut Constitution mandate political parties. She is also in favor of a budget referendum, believing that those who pay the bills should have the right to determine how money is spent. Mr. Ettinger stated that he agrees with Mrs. Smith, and would like a question regarding a referendum on the ballot when the proposed Charter is voted on. He would also like the power of the two major parties to nominate and appoint candidates for Boards and Commissions eliminated so that elected representatives can make decisions instead of parties.*

*Jack Sebastian, 4 East Shore Avenue, requested that the Council consider sharing some of its spending power with Groton taxpayers. He stated that when the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) first convened the RTM Moderator requested that the RTM continue because it serves as a check on the Town Council. Mr. Sebastian then recounted past spending practices of the RTM. He would like to see taxpayers have the opportunity to vote on the annual operating budget and suggested taking the previous three years' cost of living as determined by Social Security, and if*

*either the Education or Town budget (less debt service) exceeds that figure, then there would be a referendum. He stated that homeowners currently have a greater tax burden and it is time for the Council to give up a little of its spending power and allow the taxpayers to have a say.*

*John Sutherland, 32 Neptune Drive, agrees with the Minority Report of the CRC as he considers it a sensible proposal for a referendum. He outlined the advantages: one referendum rather than multiple referendums; the fact that if the budget does not exceed a reasonable threshold there would be no need for a referendum; and the fact that if the referendum question fails the Town would still have a budget in place since the budget would revert to the previous year's budget. The Groton Good Government PAC has started a petition in support of the CRC Minority Report and the addition of a referendum to the ballot in November. When the petition is complete it will be forwarded to the Town Clerk. He also stated that he believes that taxpayers are concerned with the increases in property taxes and the authorities' reluctance to reduce costs.*

*Pat Sparkman, 52 Soundbreeze Avenue, supports the previous speakers. She noted that the Town Council meetings can be viewed only on cable television and she would like to see more advertising on topics like this public hearing. Ms. Sparkman stated that a great many people have second homes here and they should have a say in taxes and referendums.*

*There being no further comments, Mayor Watson closed the Public Hearing at 7:50 p.m.*

#### **IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS**

*Mariellen French, 12 Little Gull Lane, implored the Council to look at the future of Groton's drinking water. She stated that the Drinking Water Quality Management Plan monitors the quality of the water, but the Southeastern CT Water Authority published that it estimates that the demand for drinkable water will exceed the supply as early as 2010. East Lyme is currently facing a water shortage, and we should be concerned with any development plans that would overstress Groton's water supply.*

*Ed Eckelmeyer, 75 High Street, Noank, requested Town support for the rowing program. He stated that the Spicer House property is prime waterfront property and he thinks that the property could be put to a higher use. The care of the rowing fleet is done by dedicated volunteers and funding for the coaches comes from user fees, but this cannot pay everything. Mr. Eckelmeyer requested that a Town Council member be appointed as a liaison to the Board of Advocates.*

*Jose Carvajal, 24 Florida Street, stated that his daughter attends Fitch Middle School. Recently, her flute was stolen from the music room and he talked to the teacher, the principal, and a school board supervisor about the situation. The instrument was where she had been instructed to leave it during the week, and now no one seems responsible. Mr. Carvajal has filed a police report regarding the incident.*

#### **V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS**

*The Town Manager will follow up with Mr. Carvajal regarding the stolen flute.*

*The Town Manager suggested that the Parks and Recreation staff give a brief presentation on the rowing program to the Committee of the Whole.*

##### **2008-0201 Boating Program - Board of Advocates Town Council Liaison**

##### **BOATING PROGRAM - BOARD OF ADVOCATES TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON**

*The Town Council is requested to appoint a liaison to the Board of Advocates for the boating program.*

#### **VI. CONSENT CALENDAR**

##### **a. Approval of Minutes**

##### **2008-0190 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)**

## RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of July 17, 2008 and July 22, 2008 are hereby accepted and approved.

**This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.**

**b. Administrative Items****2008-0183 Special Trust Fund Contributions**

## RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Ledge Light Health District - \$1,875.00 - Maritime Academy Miscellaneous  
Ledge Light Health District - \$1,500.00 - Maritime Academy Miscellaneous  
Valerie Popkin and Marjorie Farmer- \$100.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous  
Hiroko Masamune - \$100.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous  
Lauren Gorham - \$10.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous  
Sylvia Lynch and Michael Schefers - \$30.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous  
Terry Marlene Ziegler in honor of her Mother, Lee Ziegler - \$100.00 - Library Donation Fund  
Gold Star Pediatrics in memory of Dorothy Blefeld, Dr. Michael's mother - \$115.00 -  
Tercentennial Miscellaneous  
George Marshall - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary Fund  
Joan Moffett Cook - \$50.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous  
Emily Lynch - \$50.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous  
Christie Williams and Catharine Moffett - \$100.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous  
Marilyn R. Nelson - \$25.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous  
Various Donations - \$87.50 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program  
Groton Utilities Mathcing Funds - June - \$60.37 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program  
Groton Lions - \$1,000.00 - Tercentennial Legacy Playground

**This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.**

**c. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List****2008-0030 Property Tax Abatement for Commercial Fishermen**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.**

**2008-0182 Representation on Outside Agencies**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.**

**2008-0188 Police Station Repair Project**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.**

**2008-0191 Appointment of William Snyder Jr. to Community Development Advisory Committee**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.**

**2008-0192 Reappointment of Karen Morton to Retirement Board**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.**

**2008-0193 Reappointment of Mark Turner to Retirement Board**

**This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.**

**Passed The Consent Calendar**

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried unanimously

**VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)****a. Town Councilors**

*Councilor Monteiro received an email concerning use of Noank School as a temporary Senior Center and an email regarding the proposed tax abatement for firefighters.*

*Councilor Schmidt received the same email regarding the Senior Center.*

*Councilor Sheets received a call from Ed Ecklemeyer and urged him to attend a Town Council meeting to relay his concerns.*

*Councilor Streeter received an email regarding the proposed tax abatement for firefighters. He also received an email drafting a proposal for the reuse of Groton Heights School that has been forwarded to the committee investigating the potential reuses of the school.*

*Mayor Watson attended a COG meeting at the SubBase and a trails subcommittee meeting. Bob Peruzzotti and Mayor Watson walked around Fitch Senior High School and all technology seems to be in working order.*

**b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting**

*There will be an RTM meeting on August 13, 2008.*

**c. Clerk of the Council**

*September 15, 2008 will be Citizenship Day in the Town of Groton to honor all volunteers on boards and agencies in Town. On September 17, 2008 the Town Hall will celebrate it's 100th Anniversary with an open house, bunting decorating the building, and a reenactment with Mr. Plant in attendance.*

*The election process has started with 90-day ballots being sent to military individuals. It is expected that there will be a high percentage of voters in November. If anyone is interested in working at the polls, they should contact the Registrars of Voters.*

**2008-0200**

**Explanatory Text for Revised Charter**

**EXPLANATORY TEXT FOR REVISED CHARTER**

*Upon approval of sending the proposed Charter to referendum the Town Council may authorize the explanatory text.*

**d. Town Manager**

*The Town received eight bids on the animal shelter, and the Noank Zoning Commission approved the request to temporarily relocate the Senior Center at Noank School. There will be a tentative meeting with legislators on August 19. The technology demonstration at the High School will not take place on August 7, but the Permanent School Building Committee will still meet. The Town Manager gave the Councilors a preview of next week's agenda items for Group 1, Group 2, and COW meetings. A special Town Council meeting may be scheduled on August 12 to authorize the explanatory text and formally pass on the Council's comments to the CRC. The Town Manager also noted the need to discuss the Groton Resource Recovery Authority (GRR4) contract for commercial solid waste where formal action will be taken to extend for another two years. Due to the recent fire at 23 Library Street, the Building Inspector sent a demolition order to the owner, who has indicated that she plans to comply with that order.*

**e. Town Attorney**

*No report.*

*Councilor Bond questioned a \$9,000 miscellaneous fee on the current Town Attorney bill. The Town Manager stated that he receives a complete packet which outlines all charges and his office can give detailed information if requested.*

**VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Brown-Tracy**

*No meeting, no report.*

**b. Economic Development - Chairman Bond**

*No meeting, no report.*

**c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski**

*No meeting, no report.*

**d. Environment/Energy - Chairman Sheets**

*Councilor Sheets read the minutes of the meeting held on July 24, 2008, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.*

**e. Finance - Chairman Schmidt**

*Councilor Schmidt read the minutes of the meeting held on July 22, 2008, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.*

**f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman O'Beirne**

*Councilor O'Beirne read the minutes of the meeting held on July 24, 2008, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.*

**g. Public Safety - Chairman Streeter**

*No meeting, no report.*

**h. Public Works/Recreation - Chairman Monteiro**

*No meeting, no report.*

**i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Watson**

*The Committee of the Whole met July 22, 2008 at which meeting a presentation from the CRC was made and the public hearing approved.*

**IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*Councilor Streeter requested an update of the Computer Community Update Program from the Town Manager. This item will be added to the next Group 1 agenda.*

**X. NEW BUSINESS****2008-0182****Representation on Outside Agencies****RESOLUTION APPROVING TOWN REPRESENTATIVES IN OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS**

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton makes contributions to outside cultural and service agencies, and

WHEREAS, Section 8.10 of the Town Charter requires that each organization have at least one board member who has been nominated by the Town Council, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the following representatives are approved for Fiscal Year 2008-09:

SCADD - Dorothy Eames, 83 Pine Island Road, Groton  
Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut - Mary Turgeon, 178 Cedar Road, Mystic  
Sound Community Services (First Step) - Rosemary Robertson, 7 Carol Court, Groton  
ARC of Southeastern Connecticut - Enrico DeMatto, 401 Sandy Hollow Road, Mystic  
Connecticut Legal Services - Timothy D. Bates, Esq., 65 Front Street, Noank  
TVCCA - Gayle Jones, 32 St. Joseph Court, Groton  
United Community Services - Paul Mathieu, 34 Middlefield, Groton Long Point  
Boys and Girls Club - Lynn Kelly, 60 Seneca Drive, Noank  
M.A.S.H. - Marjorie D. Fondulas, 160 Mitchell Street, Groton  
Eastern Connecticut Symphony - Julie Maisch, 42 Circle Avenue, Groton

Mystic and Noank Library - A. Neil Brown, 79 Edgecomb Street, Mystic  
Bill Memorial Library - Charlotte Barnum, 20 Chestnut Hill Square, Groton  
Big Brothers Big Sisters - Jane Moriarty, 77 Cottage Street, Groton  
Visiting Nurse Association of Southeastern Connecticut - Kathleen Crook, 804 Shennecossett Road, Groton  
Groton Ambulance Association - James Streeter, 64 Pleasant Street, Groton  
Mystic River Ambulance Association - Richard Green, 146 Breezy Knoll, Mystic  
New London Drop-in Service Center - Dr. Jon Gaudio, 393 Fishtown Rd., Mystic  
Noank Mystic Community Band - Susan Weiss, 13 Center Street, Groton

**A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2008-0188**

**Police Station Repair Project**

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CAPITAL RESERVE PROJECT FOR POLICE DEPARTMENT BUILDING REPAIRS**

WHEREAS, the Town Council at its July 22, 2008 meeting authorized and directed the Finance Department to deposit the settlement proceeds of \$57,500 pertaining to water damage at the Police Department into the Capital Reserve Fund, and

WHEREAS, the proceeds are for the designated purpose of repairing damage to the addition to the Police Department building caused by water infiltration, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council authorizes a FYE 2009 Capital Reserve Project to undertake necessary repairs and forwards this Capital Reserve Project to the RTM for approval.

**A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Adopted and Referred to the Representative Town Meeting, due back on September 10, 2008.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2008-0191**

**Appointment of William Snyder Jr. to Community Development Advisory Committee**

**RESOLUTION APPOINTING WILLIAM J. SNYDER JR. TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED, that William J. Snyder Jr., 76 Kings Highway, is hereby appointed to the Community Development Advisory Committee for a term ending 2/7/10.

**A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Adopted.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2008-0192**

**Reappointment of Karen Morton to Retirement Board**

**RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING KAREN MORTON TO THE RETIREMENT BOARD**

RESOLVED that the Town Council reappoints Karen F. Morton, 97 Windwood Way, Mystic, as a resident member to the Retirement Board for a term expiring 12/31/10.

**A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2008-0193**

**Reappointment of Mark Turner to Retirement Board**

**RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING MARK A. TURNER TO THE RETIREMENT BOARD**

RESOLVED that the Town Council reappoints Mark A. Turner, 11 Cove Street, Noank, as a resident member to the Retirement Board, for a term expiring 12/31/10.

**A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be**

**Adopted.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**XI. OTHER BUSINESS**

*Councilor Sheets mentioned a press release from Attorney General Blumenthal that states that he has brought a law suit against bond rating agencies, alleging that there is a two-tier rating for municipal entities, and that in order for Towns to get higher ratings, they take out insurance. The Town Manager stated that he participated in the survey and the Town does occasionally buy insurance.*

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion to adjourn at 8:53 p.m. was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Bond and so voted unanimously.*

*Attest:*

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk  
Clerk of the Council*

*Lori Watrous, Office Assistant*